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LCPI WORK AT LAKE CHAMPLAIN, 1985

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INTRODUCTION

The possibility that the 109-mile-long Lake Champlain is the habitat of Loch Ness-like animals, dubbed Champ, continues to intrigue many individuals and groups, the Lake Champlain Phenomena Investigation (LCPI) included. The Champ controversy remains unresolved, but continued research and fieldwork by LCPI and others has uncovered more data. This report serves as an update on ongoing research and fieldwork (see Joseph W. Zarzynski, 1984, LCPI Work at Lake Champlain, 1984, *Cryptozoology*, Vol. 3: 80–83).

The 31 days of 1985 LCPI fieldwork was directed at: (1) a continuation of daylight surface surveillance with personnel using an array of shore-based binoculars and camera (still, movie, and video); (2) further testing and use of a night-sight scope for nocturnal surface surveillance; (3) an underwater search for Champ utilizing sonar and scuba monitoring; (4) further documentation, analysis, and publication of Champ sightings; (5) encouraging residents and visitors to the lake to carry cameras for possible photographic documentation of Champ; and (6) providing assistance to responsible individuals and groups in Champ-related projects.

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

The 31 days of LCPI fieldwork at Lake Champlain was executed primarily by Mary Patram Meaney and Joseph W. Zarzynski. Assistance was also provided by: Ted Straiton (July 5, August 28, September 1, October 5–6), Jack Sullivan (August 4, 8; September 1, 8), Bruce Hallenbeck (August 5, 6), Tim Clark (July 29, 30), John Becker (October 5, 6), Ray and Salome Keller (October 5, 6), Richard Smith (July 19), and Richard Cowperthwait and Lauren Murphy (August 1).

Fieldwork consisted of: daytime surface surveillance using 35 mm cameras, a Super 8 mm camera, a long-range television video camera and recorder, telephoto lenses, and camera tripods; nocturnal surface surveillance using a hand-held night-sight scope; a sonar (Raytheon DE725C) search from a 4.5-foot-long aluminum tripod deployed in 35 feet of water; scuba monitoring used primarily to position the sonar tripod underwater; scuba diver underwater photography; and a search for the reported "skeleton remains of a whale" in the lake.

Lake surface surveillance was conducted from: Kimball Dock Pier, Vermont, Button Bay, Vermont, and other lake locations. Three boat surface surveillances were also conducted.

Five Champ-related scuba diving sessions were done (four for deployment, monitoring, and retrieval of the Raytheon sonar tripod, and one as part of an underwater reconnaissance survey). Two of these scuba dives were done by Meaney and Zarzynski, and the other three by Meaney, Zarzynski, and Sullivan.

An underwater search using a diving team with wet suits, mask, fins, and snorkels was also conducted in an attempt to locate the site of reported skeletal remains of a whale. Archival research this past summer in Albany, New York, uncovered documentation circa 1919–21 that the remains of a large, unknown animal, presumably a whale, had been discovered in Lake Champlain. Working with archivists, LCPI undertook a preliminary on-site search. Further follow-up research and fieldwork must be completed to ensure that all avenues of this investigation have been explored. This account possesses a significant measure of credibility since, in 1849, the bones of a 14-foot-long white whale (*Delphinapterus leucas*) were discovered in Charlotte, Vermont, on the shores of Lake Champlain, during work by the railroad. If there is any truth to the present 65-year-old report, then the remains could be of a white whale, or even of a Champ animal (it should be remembered that one of the candidates for Champ is the zeuglodon, a primitive whale believed extinct for many millions of years).

The dates of the 31-day 1985 LCPI fieldwork were: June 22–29; July 5, 19, 27–31; August 1–9, 22, 28; September 1, 8; October 4–6. Day surface surveillance using cameras and binoculars was conducted during all 31 days; nocturnal surface surveillance was used during 10 days; sonar deployment and usage during nine days; five scuba dives; boat surface surveillance during three days; and one day conducting a diver snorkel search.

Results

LCPI fieldwork in 1985 did not result in any visual sightings of a supposed Champ animal. Intriguing targets picked up by our Raytheon DE725C sonar were analyzed by Jim Kennard, a member of LCPI and an engineer and sonar expert. He reported that the targets were from fish, not from one or several Champ animals.

Nevertheless, LCPI was able to document 14 Champ sightings reported during 1985 (Fig. 1). A short listing of these sightings appears below in chronological order:

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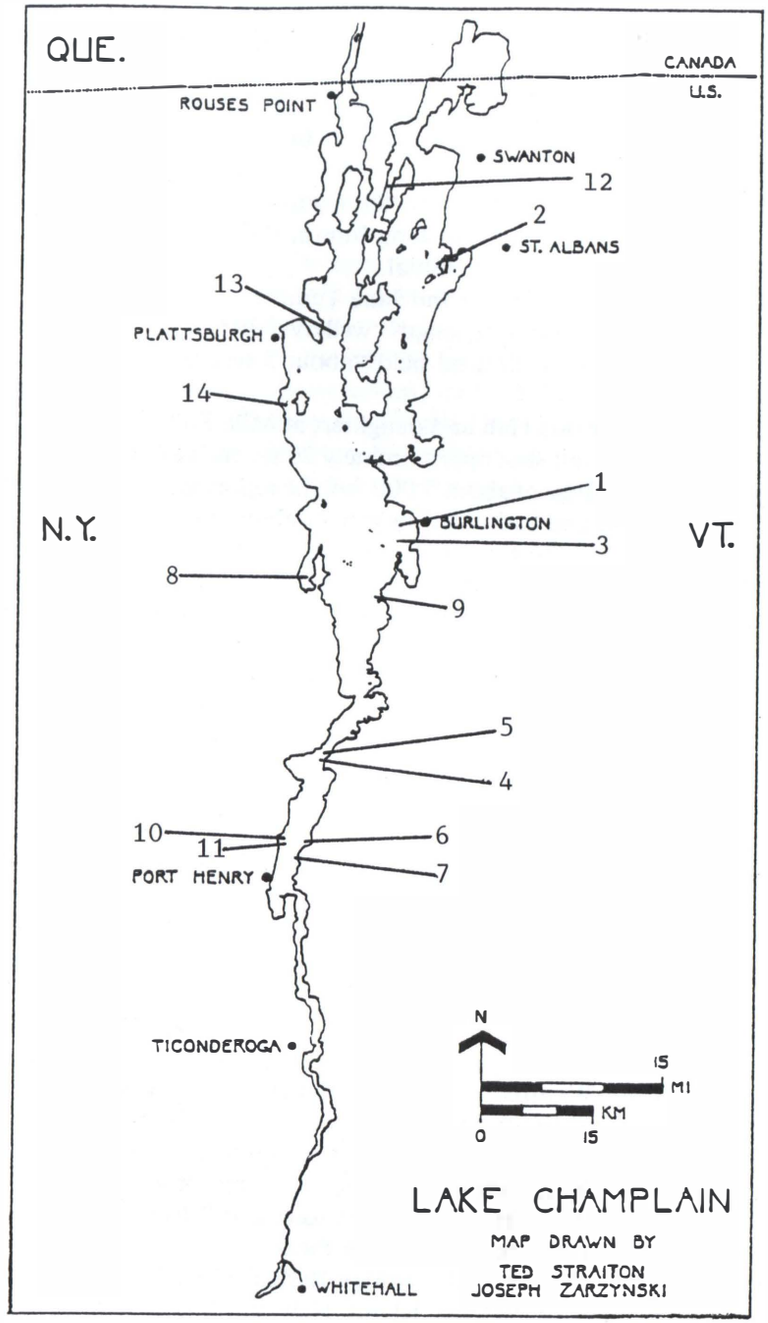
FIG. 1.—Map of Lake Champlain, with numbers indicating the locations of the 14 eyewitness sightings logged by LCPI during 1985.



—May 6, 1985: Alice and Al Brooks; off Battery Park, Burlington, Vermont; 15–20 feet long; it "looked like a long telephone pole propelled through the water with mild wake behind it."
—May 22, 1985: Lillian Cayo and 3 others; off Lapans Bay Pt., Vermont; 30 feet long; greenish-brown-very dark in color, with humps or ridges on its back.
—June 25, 1985: Dennis Hall; from the Radisson Hotel, Burlington, Vermont; first one large 15-foot-long hump, then a second hump which Hall believes was another animal.
—June 29, 1985: Peg McGeoch and Jane Temple; off Scotch Bonnet, south of Basin Harbor, Vermont; length "well over 30 feet"; head/neck similar to a brontosaurus, with head held "about 5 feet above surface"; body was snakelike.
—June 30, 1985: Dennis Hall and daughter; at Mile Point, near Basin Harbor, Vermont; Hall shot approximately 20 seconds of inconclusive Beta videotape at a range of about 5,000 feet; he reported he saw the animal's head and neck, and estimated its size at about 30 feet.
—July 1, 1985: Pete Horton; in Potash Bay, Vermont; an "unidentified submerged object" with "three, rounded black humps which were proceeding smoothly parallel to the shore"; length 20–30 feet.
—July 2, 1985: Ann Koch and Rita Shaffer; off Elm Point, near Potash Bay, Vermont; a 10-foot-long segment; no head seen; Koch claimed it was "not a fish, not an eel, not a snake"; darkish in color.
—July 30, 1985: William Billado, Jr., Gerald C. Milot, and Theodore Kessler; near southern tip of Willsboro Bay, New York; at 11 p.m., from their boat, at a range of 12–15 feet; two humps exposed that totalled 3 or 4 feet, but they estimated the animal's length at 15–20 feet.
—August 5, 1985: Jody Kompanek, husband, and son; west of Meach Cove, Vermont; ". . . it looked like a huge snake moving through the water in an up and down motion . . . . We saw the head . . ."; 25 feet long.
—August 8, 1985: Jean and Becky Joppru; in Mullen Bay, New York; 4 or 5 black humps protruding 2 or 3 feet from water; total length, 30 feet.
—August 9, 1985: Becky Joppru; just south of Mullen Bay, New York; similar to August 8, 1985 sighting, but 35 feet long.
—August 19, 1985: Wynfred Leary and daughter; from North Hero, Vermont (near Mother's Restaurant); "4 or 5 humps, black and shiny and round like a rubber tube going about 5 miles per hour"; 25 feet in total length.
—August 20, 1985: Sally Coppersfield and 2 children; from Adams Landing, Vermont; 2 dark humps, each 3 feet long and 2 feet out of the water; the humps appeared to have fins on them.
—September 2, 1985: June and Geoffrey Barker; about 100 yards north of Salmon River, near Valcour Island, New York; Barker took two photographs of a wave phenomenon that might be from an animal, but he admits the photographs are not helpful; observed from 28-foot-long cruiser.

Future Plans

LCPI will continue its field operations and research at Lake Champlain using strategies similar to those which have been conducted over the past several years. We also intend to complete our work regarding the 1919–21 report of a skeleton of a whale or an unknown animal reported to be in Lake Champlain. LCPI shall likewise be working for the adoption of the "Champ Resolution" by the Vermont Senate during the 1986 Vermont Legislative Session. The resolution calls for Champ's protection, encourages further scientific inquiry into the phenomenon, and asks people to report their Champ sightings. The resolution has already been adopted by the Vermont House of Representatives, the New York State Senate, and the New York Assembly. Since three Vermont State Senators have announced their intention to co-sponsor this resolution in the Vermont Senate, chances are good that it will pass.